

PATRIOTISM AS REFLECTED IN THE MOVIE *ARGO*

Azzahra Noor Hawa Al Hadawiyah & Sukarni Suryaningsih

**Departemen Sastra Inggris Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University
Semarang**

ABSTRACT

This thesis will discuss patriotism acts reflected by the characters of the movie *ARGO*. The movie tells about Tony Mendez a CIA agent who tries to save the staff of U.S. Embassy hostage in Iran by making a fake movie entitled *ARGO*. The objectives of this thesis are to describe the intrinsic aspect which covers the narrative elements and cinematic elements on the movie *ARGO* and explain the extrinsic aspect which covers the patriotism acts performed by the characters of the movie, especially Tony Mendez, John Chamber and Leister Siegel based on Patriotism theory by Igor Primoratz. The writer uses library research in collecting the data and uses sociology of literature approach. The result of this thesis find John Chamber, Leister Siegel and especially Tony Mendez showed modern patriotism by saving the six staff of U.S. Embassy in Iran from Iran militants. Meanwhile Iran militants represent group of people who have extreme patriotism.

Keywords: *ARGO* , patriotism, modern patriotism, extreme patriotism

Introduction

Patriotism based on *Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* means: "Love that people feel for their country" (2008:1187), but Nathanson on *In Defense of 'Moderate Patriotism'* adds, patriotism is not merely about love feeling to their country but it is also special affection for one's own country, a sense of personal identification with the country, special concern for

the well being of the country, and willingness to sacrifice to promote the country's good (1993:34-35). In short, patriotism is not about a love feeling to the country but also an act towards the country.

Patriotism was not popular until 16th century. There are some reviews about patriotism in the *Historical Dictionary of Philosophy*. It reviews the term of Patriotism since 16th century to the modern era, gives numerous references, but all of them only passes references from one to another. From all of these references, only J.G Fichte who gives more explanation, but it is rather refers to nationalism than patriotism. Then this was changed in 1980, due, in part, to the revival communitarianism, which came in response to the individualistic, liberal political and moral philosophy epitomized by John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* (1971), but it was also due to the resurgence of nationalism in several parts of the world (Primoratz, 2013:1).

The change is remarked by Andrew Oldenquist in 1982. Oldenquist defines patriotism as an account of morality as a matter of various loyalties rather than abstract principles and ideals. In addition, Alasdair MacIntyre argues that patriotism is a central moral virtue (Primoratz, 2013:1).

The writer chooses a movie to explore and gives explanation in explaining patriotism. A movie can illustrate a story, it also reflects the life of the society, so exploring patriotism through movie at the same time will provide us with the lesson

about society. Then the writer decides to analyze the character in *ARGO* movie, to see the conduct of patriotism.

The movie *ARGO* itself is a true story, which is adapted from the book by Tony Mendez, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) secret agent, titled *The Master of Disguise* and based on an article by Joshua Bearman, *The Great Escape: How The CIA Used a Fake Sci-Fi to Rescue Americans from Tehran*. Those two sources explain how Tony Mendez rescues six U.S. Embassy staff from Tehran, Iran, during Iran hostage crisis in 1979-1981. This movie is directed by Ben Affleck who also acted in the movie as Tony Mendez. Set on 1970s the movie has won an 85th Academy Awards 2013 for Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Film Editing.

Aim of the Study

Along with the title of the study, “Patriotism as Reflected in the Movie *ARGO*”, the writer determines the aims of the study namely:

- 1.) To describe and analyze the intrinsic aspect of the movie *ARGO*.
- 2.) To explain the patriotism act of Tony Mendez when he tried to save the six staffs of U.S Embassy.

Analysis

Moderate Patriotism

In this movie Tony Mendez shows the theory of patriotism that stated by Igor Primoratz modern patriotism is one’s loyalty to one’s country and fellow countryman, based on universal justice and basic human solidarity. He rescued the six escapees because he knows that the six escapees also served the country he served. It also

shows a morality on the patriotism. The act of patriotism is reflected when Tony Mendez and his fellow, commit to save the six staff of U.S Embassy in Iran to go back in America. He precisely planned to rescue the six escapees back to America safely, and not executed by Iranian militants and demonstrators. He also assures that he will get the six staffs out from Iran safely like the dialogue below:

Tony Mendez: "That's why I'm here. I'm gonna help you. I'll be with you the whole way. This what I do."

Cora Lijeck: "Have you gotten people out this way before?"

Tony Mendez: "This would be a first."

Joe Stafford: "Do you know that everyday they catch another friend of Shah at the airport? Kangaroo trials and then firing squads, just for having Americans names in their phone books. You've been her an hour. And you're asking us to trust you with our lives, Mr.?"

Tony Mendez: "Harkins."

Joe Stafford: "That's your real name?"

Tony Mendez: "No. I know there are risks involved. Serious risks. But it is time to go"

(Argo (2012), 00.57.41-00.58.17)

Tony Mendez: "This is what I do. I get people out. And I've never left anyone behind."

Joe Stafford: "I wish I could believe you Mr. Harkins."

Tony Mendez: "My name is Tony Mendez. I'm from New York. My father worked construction. My mother teaches elementary school. I have a wife and a 10-year-old son. You play along with me today, I promise you, I will get you out tomorrow."

(Argo (2012), 01.06.02-01.06.32)

Because of Mendez's braveness and responsibility is a form of patriotism act, Tony Mendez gets an appreciation from his country. Tony Mendez gets an intelligence star medal. He deserves the Highest Award of Merit of the Clandestine

Services of the United States. He also gets recognition from President Carter that said Tony Mendez is a great American.

Tony Mendez's patriotism act can be concluded as a moderate patriotism. He fulfills his duties to his country to rescue the six escapees from Iran. Then when the operation is dismissed he still fulfills his duties as a form of responsibility to his country and his fellow countryman based on basic human solidarity. He knows that if he is not rescuing the six escapees their life will be in danger, so he still takes a risk to save the six escapees.

Patriotism act is also showed by John Chamber and Lester Siegel. Although they are not directly involved in the operation, their roles are significant in succeeding the mission. They know that their role is needed to save the six escapees. John Chamber, one who is done another mission before, knows that to save the escapees they must make a real movie as a cover so no one will suspect the operation like he said in the dialog above.

John Chamber: "Look, if you're gonna do this, you gotta do it. The Kho-maniacs are Froot Loops, but they got cousins who sell prayer rugs and eight-tracks on La Brea. You can't build cover stories around a movie that doesn't exist. You need script. You need a producer.

(Argo (2012), 00.28.20-00.28.28)

Then he helps Tony Mendez connects to Lester Siegel so they can make a cover movie. Then Lester Siegel patriotism act proved when he decides to join the

operation after watch the hostages in the television. This can be seen in the dialogue below. From the dialogue, Lester realizes that the operation needs him to save the escapees, so he decides to join the operation. Lester's act proved that he joins the operation to save his country man based on basic human solidarity.

John Chamber: "You ever think Lester, how this is all for the cameras?"

Leister Siegel: "Well, they're getting the ratings, I'll say that for—
(look into the television that broadcast the condition in Iran)

(Argo (2012), 00.30.08-00.30.15)

Robust Patriotism

Beside modern patriotism, Tony Mendez also performs robust patriotism. This kind of patriotism is reflected when Mendez rejects the command from his director to dismiss the operation. Stated in previous chapter, the object of this patriotism is one's country and polity, but they can object the government in the name of country's true character, history, and aspiration. In here Tony rejects the command as he thinks that the command is opposite with the true character, history and aspiration of the United State of America.

Although the operation has been dismissed he still wants to save the six escapees. When his supervisor calls him to give the information that the operation has to dismissed, he balked the decision. As seen in the dialogue below, Tony Mendez

also underlines that they are responsible to rescue the six escapees. Tony also insists to go through the operation even it dismissed because he feel responsible to the six escapees and that's how Tony shows his patriotism towards his country.

Tony Mendez: "We're responsible for these people."

Jack O'Donnell: "What we are, is required to follow order, I'm sorry."

(*Argo* (2012), 01.17.33-01.17.36)

Tony Mendez: "Somebody's responsible when things happens Jack. I'm responsible. I'm taking them through." (Hang up the phone).

Jack O'Donnell: "Tony?"

(*Argo* (2012), 01.22.26-01.22.32)

Extreme Patriotism

Beside moderate and robust patriotism, there is extreme patriotism. In the movie *ARGO*, extreme patriotism is reflected in Iran militant's act. As stated by Primoratz, extreme patriotism stands with their country even their country in the position of right or wrong and rejects morality and humanity. This extreme patriotism act is shown by Iran militant by occupying U.S Embassy, hostage the staff, and even torturing them. They do this because U.S government gives an asylum to Iran's Shah who rules Iran arbitrarily before. The extreme patriotism shows when the militant occupy the U.S Embassy and seizes the staff by covering their eyes. They even use a gun to intimidate the hostage. They also torture them by a fake dead execution, so the hostages are terrified. The militant do everything in order to get the Shah back, so they

can punish the Shah, like the dialogue below, when the militant spokesperson says what they want if the U.S government want to save the hostage.

Spokesperson: “We will begin the trials and carry out the sentences. The answer to that is clear, we wants the Shah. Carter and his administrationis shameful to talk about human rights. Carter and his government have given asylum to the worst criminal of all.”

(*Argo*(2012), 00.28.20-00.28.28)

Conclusion

From the analysis about patriotism reflected in the movie *ARGO*, we can summarize that patriotism is reflected in this movie. There are two kinds of patriotism reflected in the movie which are modern patriotism and extreme patriotism. Modern patriotism is showed by Tony Mendez, John Chamber, and Leister Siegel. This kind of patriotism is patriotism where universal justice and basic human solidarity is the base of this kind of patriotism. Tony Mendez has sacrifice himself to rescue the six escapees from Iran and sent them back safely to America. Tony Mendez still wants to save the escapees even the operation is dismissed, and he succeeded to get back the six escapees back to U.S. In other hand John Chamber and Lester Siegel helps the operation by helps Tony Mendez set a fake movie as a disguise. They make all efforts, so the operation can be succeeded. Extreme patriotismis showed by Iran militants. People who have extreme patriotism will do anything for their country in any circumstances and rejects morality and humanity. Iran militant occupy the U.S. Embassy with violence, they also use weapon and torture the hostage in order to get

back their former leader who get an asylum in the United State of America, all of this acts is a reflection of extreme patriotism.

Bibliography

Primoratz, Igor. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Patriotism*. Web. 01 March 2016. 03.57 pm. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/patriotism/>>